



June 12, 2013

Dear Michigan Legislators:

Michiganders for Shelter Pets respectfully requests that you schedule a hearing for SB 354 and offer support to this bill. SB 354 is also known as "Grant's Bill" (named after a dog killed in the St. Joseph County Animal Control shelter's gas chamber) and will end the use of gas chambers in Michigan animal shelters. Please find enclosed many letters of support from animal sheltering and animal control professionals throughout the state of Michigan—some of whom are your constituents.

Michiganders for Shelter Pets was created to bring together Michigan voters, animal shelters, animal protection agencies, Michigan businesses and Michigan professionals in a coordinated effort to advance the welfare of Michigan shelter pets. We speak for our citizen advocate group of over 2,500 Michigan voters and over 100 Michigan businesses and Michigan animal welfare professionals.

Only four shelters in Michigan continue to use carbon monoxide gas chambers (Branch, Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties). I have talked to the director/Sheriff in two of those counties and they stated that the next time their gas chamber breaks down, they will not be fixing it and will be moving exclusively to the use of EBI (euthanasia by injection). Not only have the vast majority of Michigan county shelters moved away from gassing to EBI, but many states are following suit rapidly. Earlier this month, Texas was added to the growing list of states that ban the use of gas chambers. Pennsylvania and Alabama jumped on board just prior to that in late 2012. Michigan cannot and should not be left behind!

Funding is readily available to those counties to help with transition costs, including the decommissioning and removal of the actual gas chambers, and the training of staff members on EBI. There will not be a cost to the remaining counties for the switch. EBI is also less expensive to use on a daily basis than gas chamber use.

Most importantly, the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) updated their euthanasia guidelines this year. These guidelines are considered the gold standard for the animal welfare industry, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development's (MDARD) own guidelines for Michigan shelters state that they accept the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia as the authority on humane euthanasia, and they expect all individuals administering euthanasia in Michigan shelters to follow these guidelines. The new 2013 AVMA guidelines state that they no longer recommend the use of carbon monoxide gas for "routine euthanasia of cats and dogs." Therefore, it's imperative to pass SB 354 for Michigan shelters to be in compliance with the guidelines of the MDARD and the AVMA.

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I hope that Michigan will soon be able to join the other forward-thinking states that have ended the use of gas chambers. I believe you will find that all Michigan shelters, animal care professionals, humane societies and national veterinary and animal welfare groups agree that EBI is the gold standard, and Michigan's shelter pets deserve the gold standard in all aspects of their care—including euthanasia. We ask that you schedule a hearing for SB 354 and that you support this bill, so that all of Michigan's shelter pets receive the best care possible. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter that is of such importance to a great many Michiganders.

Sincerely,

Holly Thoms  
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